

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, July 28. 1694.

Quest. 1. **W**Hat do you believe was the chief Cause of the destruction of the Empire of Constantinople?

Ans. Most Historians conclude the principal Causes to be the Divisions of the Christians, and the Perfidies and Cruelties that were exercised by many of them, to make themselves Masters of the Empire: For they were so divided, that instead of thinking how they might unite against the Common Enemy, they chiefly employ'd themselves in endeavouring to become great, tho' to the Injury of each other, and thus in violating the Laws of Christianity they acted against true Policy, which happens much oftener than Men are aware of.

Quest. 2. Is that general Account true that we have, how Alexander the third treated the Emperor Frederick, making him wait at his Gate for Admittance, and when received 'twas but in a scurvy manner, Alexander setting his Foot on his Neck, and speaking very contemptuously of him, it being cited both by Protestant and Popish Writers; by such of the first as endeavouring to give an ill Idea of the Popes, relate this as a Mark of their Ambition; and those of the last that would establish the power of the Pope over the Emperors, bring this as a president?

Ans. We have a Relation of it much after this manner from many Authors, and 'tis very probable there was some ground for the Story, tho' we meet with one that contradicts it, whose reasons we'll here give, and leave others to judge whether or no they are sufficient to destroy the Testimony of those that assert it; 'tis M. Leti, who affirms Alexander was too wise a Man, by so insolent an action to hazard his being ill treated by Frederick, and blamed by all the World: But would the Pope have ventured it, the Emperour was not patient enough to endure such a treatment, nor the Republick of Venice so imprudent as to suffer the Pope to commit so great a breach against the Sacred Rites of Princes.

Quest. 3. How came the Greek Tongue to be so Corrupted as now it is, (or at least as I am informed it is) it being very different from what was antiently spoke? what is the Reason that at Athens where they formerly spoke the most correctly, they now speak the worst? and wherein does this Corruption and Change chiefly consist?

Ans. When the Greek Tongue was the most Polite, the common sort of People spake very different from the Learned in respect to many barbarous Words and Phrases. It was likewise the same in Rome, where according to the Observation of Quintilian, the whole Theater sometimes made Exclamations in barbarous Terms. And we have to this Day a Book written in Caesar's time, by an Officer who expressed himself like the Common Souldiers in the Army, 'tis A Journal of the Wars with Spain; we meet there with many Popular Expressions, that are not to be found elsewhere, or at least very rarely in other Authors, whereas they are very frequent in this Journal. This Observation has made some believe that the Modern Greek might be the same with that which the People formerly spoke; but it appears by the Exclamations upon their Theaters, as may be seen in the Byzantine Historians, and by the Speeches made in the Councils, where we may see some Remains of the vulgar Language of that time, that it was not near so corrupted as the modern Greek is. The Reasons of this Change is apparently their mixing themselves with other Nations, and other Nations inhabiting with them. The Greek Tongue was formerly spread thro' the greatest part of Europe, and into divers Provinces of Asia and Africa, it was common in Syria, and even beyond the Euphrates carried thither by some Greek Colonies that were esta-

blished there. And in Egypt it was so well received, that it took the place of the Antient Egyptian Tongue, which by little and little was lost, as the Greek Tongue again was, when another People became Masters of Egypt; the Greek was afterwards spread so far, that Seneca says, *Quid tibi volunt in medijs barbarorum regionibus Græcæ Civitates? quid inter Indos persique Macedonicus Sermo?* 'Tis easily conceived that the Greeks being thus dispersed amongst so many Nations would corrupt their Tongue, in taking many of their words, as that they likewise gave them divers Greek terms. 'Twas after this manner that the Tongue of the Copti became a Mixture of the Antient Egyptian, Greek and Arabick. But the Romans having succeeded the Macedonians, corrupted the Greek Tongue yet more, in still intermixing words and manners of speaking according to the ruling Nation. Salmatius believes 'twas at that time that the Antient Dialects were lost, and that every one spoke after the same manner, which was more conformable to the Attick Dialect than to the rest. And indeed we have had no Writer since which has writ in the Ionick Tongue, as Herodotus formerly did, nor in the Doric as Theocritus, Moscus and Rion did. But the greatest depravation of the Greek Tongue happened when Constantine established his Seat at Constantinople; whither he brought a great Number of considerable Persons from Rome, and as they spoke Latin in the Court and Council of the Emperour, it was necessary that the Greeks that had any Business at Court, shou'd speak that Tongue also, and that the Romans shou'd learn Greek, to make themselves be understood by the People; from whence it happened, their design being only to be understood, that the Greeks did not learn the Latin well, nor the Romans the Greek, but each strangely corrupted their own Language. After the time of Justinian the Greek was so corrupted that it was not only filled with more barbarous terms than before, but the Rules of Grammer were lost also; this Corruption seems to be introduced into the Greek Tongue by the great Numbers of Officers and Souldiers of the barbarous Northern Nations which were entertained in the Emperors Service in Constantinople: These Men, whereof the Court and Armies were full, not being able to learn any Tongue with exactness, spoke Greek after a very barbarous manner, and even corrupted the Greeks themselves, who were little inclined to Study in these almost perpetual Troubles of their Empire. The same likewise happened to the Latin Tongue, because of the multitude of Strangers which came to Rome, and became even Roman Citizens, either because they were born in Roman Colonies, or by some other way, and who were often raised to the Chief Offices of State, which made Juvenal say, Sat. 1. 14.

*Jampridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Oromer,
Et Linguae & Mores, &c. secum, &c. vexit.*

Those who at this Day live under the Turk have mixt several of the words of the Mahometan with their own Language, and those which are under the Republick of Venice corrupt theirs with the Italian Tongue: And amongst all the Greeks the Dialect of Constantinople comes nearest to the Antient Greek, because this City being the Seat of the Empire, there were more Learned Men and Persons of Quality there than elsewhere, who have preserved it more from those Barbarities than others have done. 'Tis also reported, that Athens, formerly the most Learned and Correct in her Language, now speaks the worst, the Reason of which is beaule it was long inhabited by a Succession of divers Nations.

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This depravation further consists in the changes, additions, retrenchment of Letters, and different terminations in respect to Names. For instance, the Greeks at this time put the Γ for the Δ, as γα for δα, the Ε for the Ι, as ευλιν for ευλινδς; the Ζ for a double F, or a double Σ, as παρ.ζειν παρ.πειν or παρ.στειν, &c. they add when they say ευμινδ'ζειν for ευμινδ'ειν, σεμινδ'ειν for σεμιν, &c. they retrench in saying βλεμιν instead of βλεμινα, αλφια for αλφια. They terminate the Masculine ΑΣ in ΗΣ, and the ancient Adjectives which ended in ΩΔΗΣ in ΕΡΟΣ, &c. They likewise confound the Vowels, which have the same sound as the Ο and the Ω, and put indifferently Ι, Η, Υ, ΕΙ, ΟΙ; and many other the like Changes are slipt in amongst them.

Quest. 4. *A Friend of mine who never valued any Religion, as hardly having known any, by reason of his long Travels, and he had at his coming lately into England a great fit of sickness, which put him upon Vows of Repentance (the light of Nature having told him that he was oblig'd to live a Moral Life, being spirited or kidnapp'd away at four Years Old, and has been ever since in strange Lands, and amongst all Religions.) He has since recovered, and told me his thoughts the other day, viz. that he found himself very plyable to entertain one of these three, either that of the Papist, Church of England, or Presbyterian Religion, and that which makes him in suspense which to chuse, are three Vertues, and three Vices he finds them all to be generally Masters of: For the first, these Vertues, the continual and often repeated Divine Service in the Churches and Chappels of the Papists, the great Charity of the Church of England, in acknowledging Gods mercy to extend to the very Turks and Infidels; and lastly, the great seeming Purity of the Presbyterians: 1. Their Vices. The Cruelty and uncharitableness of the Papists. 2. The general neglect of Devotion in the Church of England, as never seeming hearty in the manner of their Worship, according to the Rubrick, (which he likes very well) and lastly, the ill nature and Covetousness he finds among the Presbyterians, he has promised to submit to your Judgments?*

Ans^r. Since the only reason that leaves him undetermined seems to be the general practice of each Sect in respect to their particular good and bad qualities which he has observed in them all, therefore if we show him the Vertue of the one exceeds that of the other, and that the Vice of the same Community is also less than what the others are guilty of, it will be a good step towards the fixing him. And upon Examination we shall find it determined in favour of the Church of England, for neither the repetition of the Popish Ave Maryes or Pater-nosters, or the devout Looks and Pretensions of the Presbyterians, will avail them any thing without Charity, and their Vices show they want it, nay all their Religion is vain who have it not; but they that possess it are in a more probable way to be fitted for all other Christian Duties; for St. Paul saith, 1 Cor. 13. Those that are without Charity want

all things, but those who are charitable possess many Vertues. Then for their Vices, as Cruelty and Uncharitableness to our fellow Creatures, wholly unfits us for our duty towards our Neighbour, so it will not be very difficult to prove that Moroseness and Covetousness will not only be a means to destroy Charity, but also an evident sign that they prefer a little Riches before the Commands of God Almighty; so that those persons that are guilty in this nature transgress the Laws of God, in respect to themselves, and their Neighbours. Whereas those that are not Devout do no injury to their Neighbour, altho' they do indeed a very great one to themselves. Tho' 'tis not the practice of any Community that we are to follow (any farther than they agree with the Holy Scriptures) but their Doctrine; and if that be well examined, for no Man must take up any Religion without considering it well first, we believe there will be no reasonable exceptions against the Church of England. And for the proof of which we refer him to the Articles and Canons of the Church and to their practical writings on Divinity, where he'll find more satisfaction than we are capable of giving him, or the length of our Paper will permit.

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